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Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council to consider request by Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmad Hussein for "immediate and appropriate measures" in response to recent air aggression by Iran.

+ Security Council condemns acts of violence in Rafah and urges Israel to abide by 1949 Geneva Convention; Council members also express grave concern over continued deterioration of situation in Gaza strip.

+ Preparatory Committee for United Nations Conference on Environment and Development ends fourth session at headquarters; adopts draft principles of Rio Earth Summit Declaration.

+ Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Libya, Vladimir Petrovsky, will leave Rome tomorrow for Tripoli where he is scheduled to meet on Wednesday with Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Al-Qathafi.

+ Responding to the "particularly precarious" food situation in Afghanistan, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali appeals to international community to urgently provide 30,000 metric tonnes of food for 1 million Afghans.

+ Human Rights Committee praises Government of Colombia for efforts to comply with the International Civil and Political Rights; urges Government to put an end to impunity -- a central element in the insecurity and terror afflicting many Colombians.

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The Security Council is expected to consider a request by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ahmad Hussein, for "immediate and appropriate measures" in response to recent air aggression by Iran, during its consultations today.

In a letter to the President of the Council, Simbarashe Simbanenduku Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe), dated 5 April, the Iraqi Foreign Minister protested four air attacks by the Iranian Air Force inside Iraq, calling them "an act of

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plain and unjustified aggression". In the letter, Mr. Hussein also warned Iran of the serious consequences of such acts and said Iraq reserved the right to respond.

The Iraqi Air Force was now conducting patrols to protect its air space from the possibility of a recurrence of the Iranian attacks, according to the Foreign Minister's letter.

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The Security Council has condemned the acts of violence at Rafah in the Gaza Strip and urged maximum restraint in order to bring the violence to an end. It urged Israel to abide by the 1949 Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in time of war and to act in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

In a statement read out by Council President Simbarashe Simbanenduku Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe) on behalf of Council members early Saturday morning, 4 April, the Council also requested the Secretary-General, in accordance with Council resolution 681 (1990), to use his good offices regarding the situation concerning Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation. By that resolution, adopted on 20 December 1990, the Council requested the Secretary-General to monitor and observe the situation of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories and to keep the Security Council regularly informed.

Also Saturday morning, Council members expressed grave concern over the "continued deterioration of the situation in the Gaza Strip ... in which several Palestinians have been killed and many more injured". The Council further expressed concern that "any escalation of violence would have serious implications for the peace process".

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A set of 27 draft principles that could become the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development was approved early Saturday morning, as the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) concluded its fourth and final session.

The text, proposed by the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Tommy Koh of Singapore, is the only "clean" text -- free of brackets -- that the Committee is sending to the Rio Conference for further consideration and finalization.

At its last meeting, the Committee approved 11 chapters of "Agenda 21" -- a comprehensive plan of action extending into the twenty-first century -- which covers major areas affecting the relationship between the environment and the economy. It also adopted elements for two other chapters. The subjects covered concern protection of the oceans and coastal areas and rational use of their living resources; strengthening the role of major groups, corresponding to nine chapters of Agenda 21; and combating

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deforestation. The two texts containing elements for chapters concern international institutional arrangements and legal instruments and mechanisms.

In a concluding statement, the Secretary-General of the Conference, Maurice Strong, said, "we must not allow this planet and its people to remain in brackets". And Committee Chairman Tommy Koh, of Singapore, apologized in his concluding remarks for not having achieved more, and added that he looked forward to greater success at the Rio Conference.

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The Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Libya, Vladimir Petrovsky, who left New York over the weekend for Rome, will leave that city tomorrow for Tripoli where he is scheduled to meet on Wednesday with Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Al-Qathafi.

Mr. Petrovsky is scheduled to leave Tripoli Thursday night for Geneva where he will brief Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali on Friday, 10 April.

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Calling attention to the food situation in Afghanistan which he described as "particularly precarious", Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appealed to the international community for some 30,000 metric tonnes of food to feed some one million people in that country.

In a statement made public today, the Secretary-General stressed that there was a need to act quickly to avoid further tragic humanitarian situation and its political repercussions at this time, when after 13 years of strife, Afghanistan was "moving towards a political settlement".

The severe food shortage has affected the entire country, but is particularly serious in Kabul and its immediate surrounding areas. Mr. Boutros-Ghali pointed out that there was a danger the situation might deteriorate further, causing widespread human suffering and malnutrition and resulting in increased numbers of displaced persons and new flows of refugees, "adding to the millions who have already sought refuge in neighbouring countries".

He also called on all parties concerned to fully cooperate in ensuring the safe transportation of food items to the needy, which will be distributed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Afghanistan.

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The Human Rights Committee has praised the Government of Colombia for many of its efforts to comply with the International Civil and Political Rights. At the same time, the Government has been urged to put an end to impunity -- a central element in the insecurity and terror afflicting many Colombians.

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In its concluding observations of Colombia's third periodic report, the Committee expressed concern over the absence of investigations of sometimes grave crimes, the failure of the judicial system to function with real effect and the inability of the civilian Government to take appropriate action to end the situation.

Earlier, representatives of Colombia told the Committee that although there was still a "high level of social violence" in their country, violence against journalists, trade unionists and teachers had declined considerably, as had reports of torture, disappearances and mass murders. They said the Colombian Government had established a number of human rights institutions which followed up on complaints of violations, dealt with acts of violence against families and children, negotiated with guerrilla groups and investigated cases of murder or torture involving the police or military.

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